

# Neighborhood Patterns

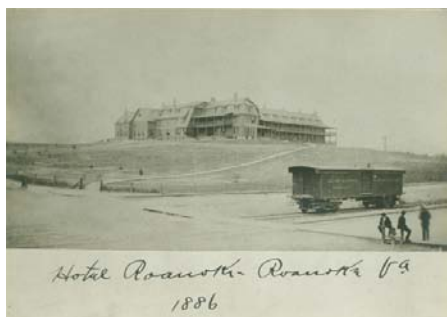
This section of the Pattern Book provides a general description of Roanoke's neighborhoods by discussing the history, development, and dominant architectural styles and house types found within each neighborhood. For the purposes of the Pattern Book, neighborhoods have been classified by period of development:

- Downtown Neighborhoods: 1880s-1920s.
- Traditional Neighborhoods: 1920s-1940s.
- Suburban Neighborhoods: 1940s-present.

The neighborhood classifications will help residents identify which type of neighborhood they live in, or decide where they may want to live. Neighborhood classifications don't always correspond to a specific architectural pattern. As with most American cities, Roanoke has evolved over time and neighborhoods and their patterns have redeveloped over time. This results in some neighborhoods that are transitional, featuring a combination of architectural elements from Downtown, Traditional, and Suburban neighborhoods. The neighborhood classifications are intended as a convenient starting point for further exploration. On the following page is a map (Figure 1) of Roanoke neighborhoods grouped by classification.

## Downtown Neighborhoods

(1880s to 1920s)



Photographs Courtesy of the Virginia Room

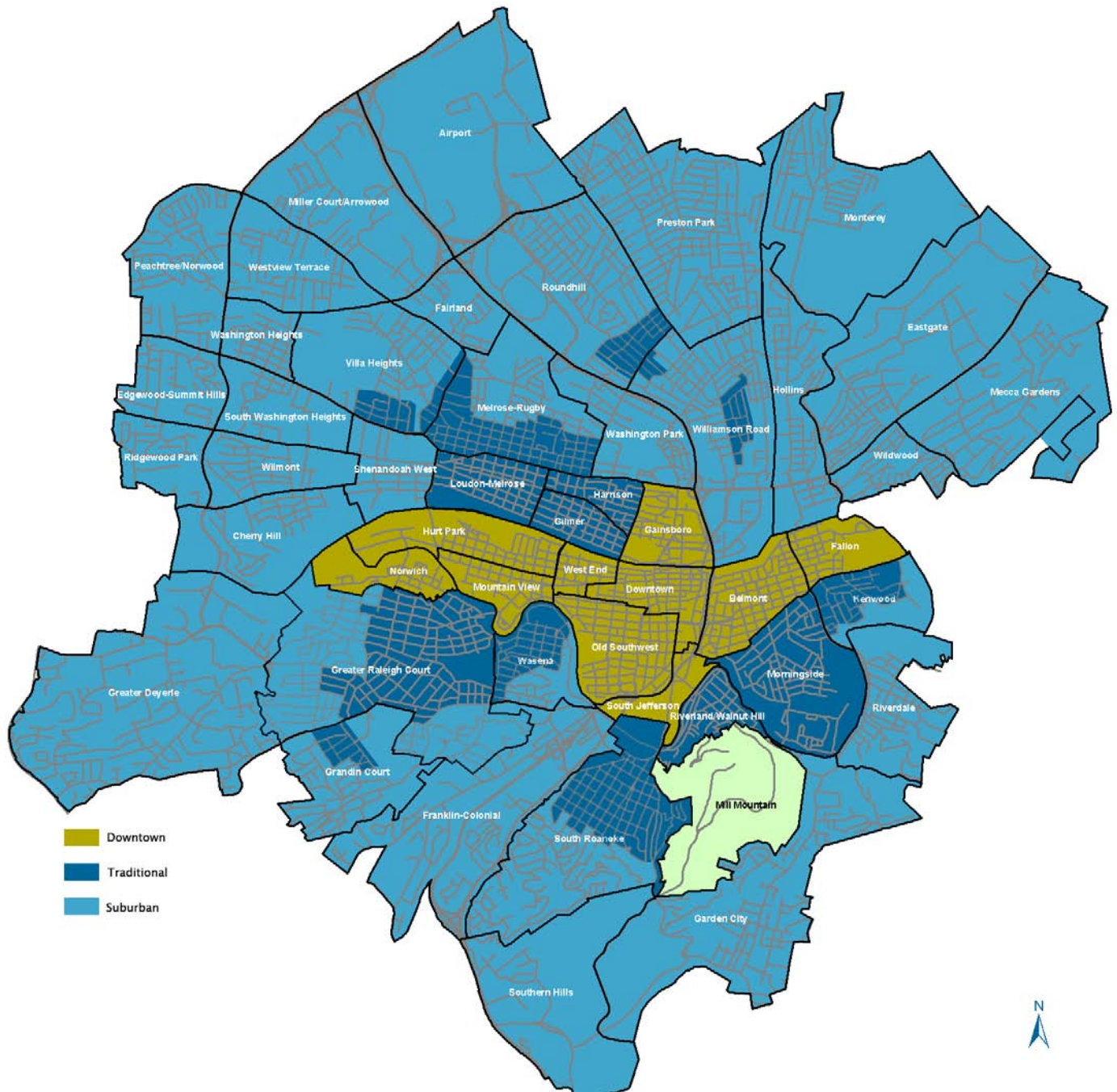
The oldest neighborhoods in Roanoke are classified as Downtown neighborhoods which were constructed between 1880 and 1920. The following neighborhoods, or portion of neighborhoods, are classified as Downtown:

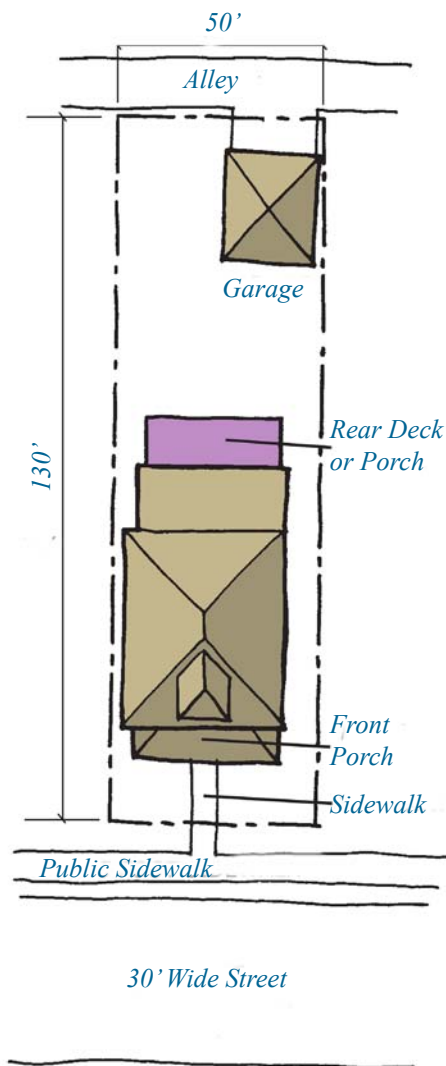
- |             |                   |
|-------------|-------------------|
| • Belmont   | • Mountain View   |
| • Downtown  | • Norwich         |
| • Fallon    | • Old Southwest   |
| • Gainsboro | • South Jefferson |
| • Hurt Park | • West End        |

These neighborhoods developed at a time of heavy industrialization during the late-nineteenth century Roanoke Valley railroad boom. The Atlantic, Mississippi, and Ohio Railroad lines were constructed through the area during the 1870s forming the Norfolk & Western Railway Company (N&W). The population of the area soared from 669 in 1880, to more than 5,000 by 1884 making Roanoke the 'Magic City'.

To manage growth and plot development, the Roanoke Land and Improvement Company was formed to construct the Hotel Roanoke (which required expansion before its initial construction was even complete), a

**Figure 1: Neighborhood Classifications**





railroad passenger station (O. Winston Link Museum), and homes for the expanding population. Between February of 1881 and June of 1882, 78 frame and 60 brick houses were built by the company, with an additional 62 brick homes planned for construction as soon as contractors could be found to build them.

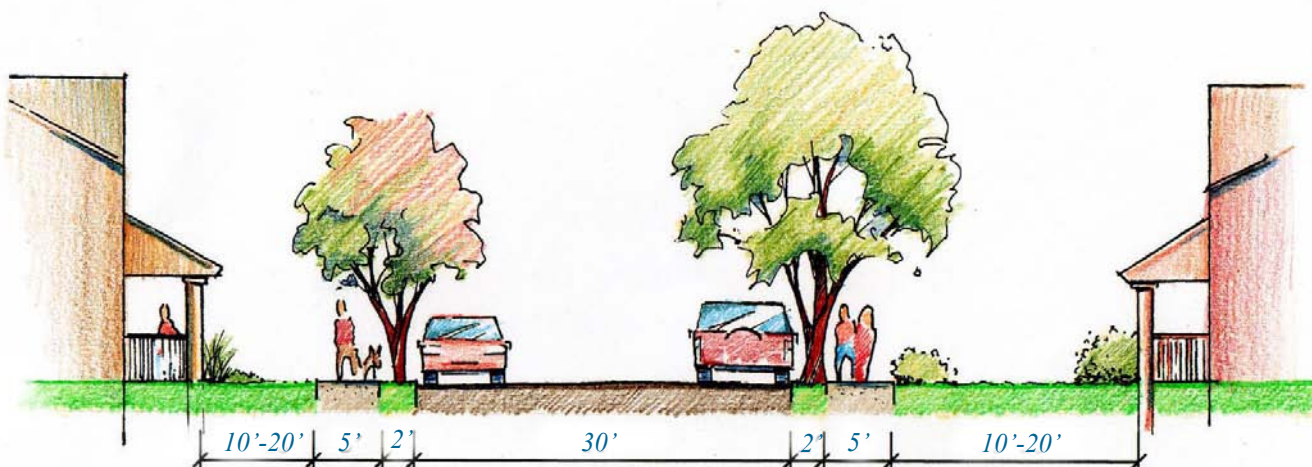
These neighborhoods typically featured vernacular (the common building style of a period or place) frame houses with front porches, small narrow lots, fenced yards, and sidewalks. Since they predate the rise of the automobile era, Downtown neighborhoods feature grids of narrow streets with brick or concrete sidewalks and closely spaced buildings for shorter walking distance between destinations. Alleys were located behind houses and served as service corridors. The following development patterns are indicative of a Downtown neighborhood:

## Streetscape Patterns

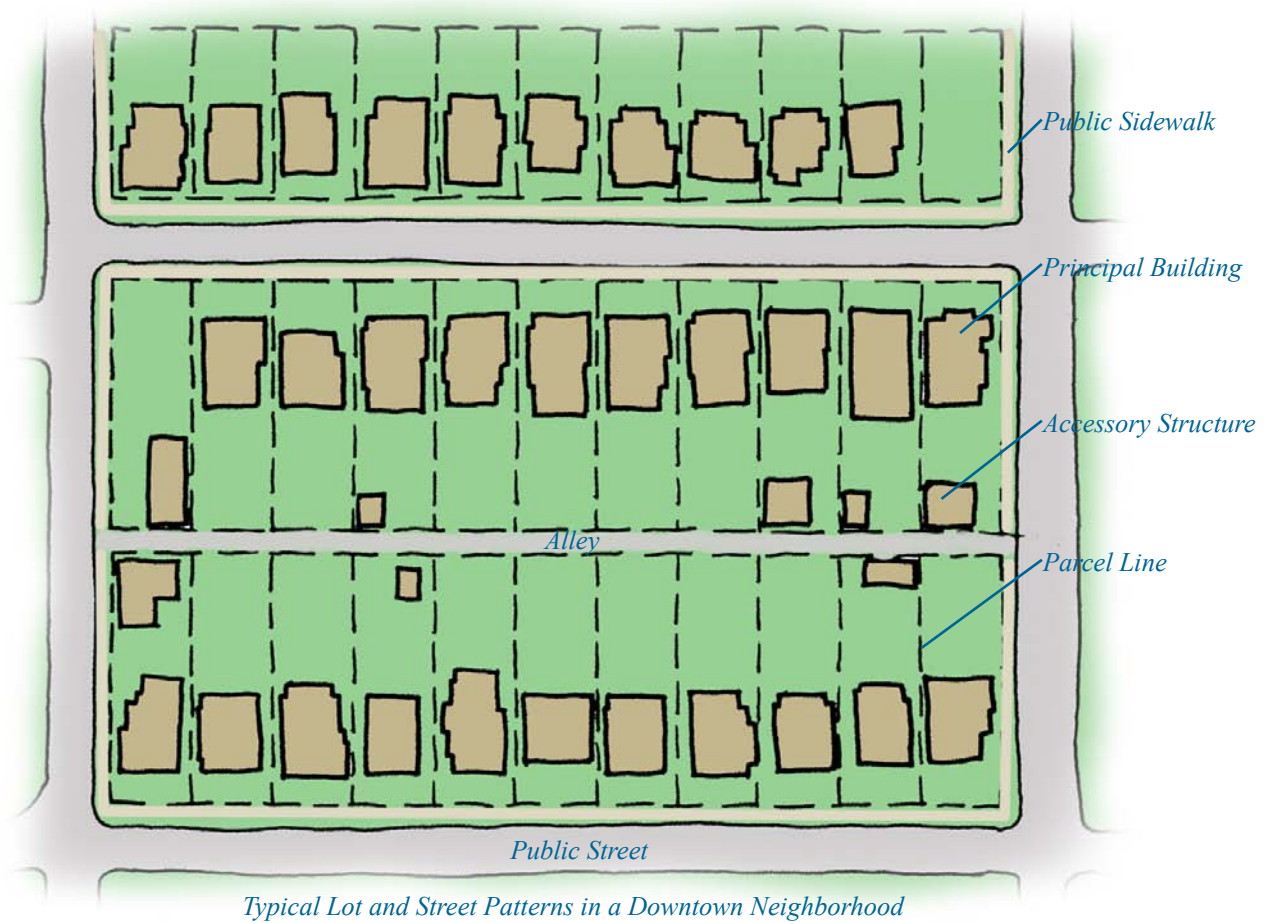
- Grid of narrow, yield streets (20-30 feet) with parking on both sides.
- Granite and stone curbs, 3 inches in height, some replaced with concrete, 8 inches in height.
- Deciduous trees located in 6 inch to 3 foot planting strips.
- Concrete sidewalks, with some original brick sidewalks, 5 feet in width.

## Lot Patterns

- Small, narrow lots that average 5,000 square feet.
- Shallow, consistent front and side yard setbacks.
- Two-story houses with front porches as important living and social space.
- Garages located to the rear of the property, accessed by an alley. Driveways from the public street are not common.
- Yards defined by stone/concrete retaining walls, iron fences, or hedge rows.
- Concrete or brick walkways connecting the front entry to the public sidewalk.







*Mature Deciduous Tree*



*Iron Fence and Hedge Row*



*Stone Retaining Wall*



*Downtown Streetscape*



*Stone Curb and Brick Sidewalk*

## Traditional Neighborhoods

(1920s to 1940s)



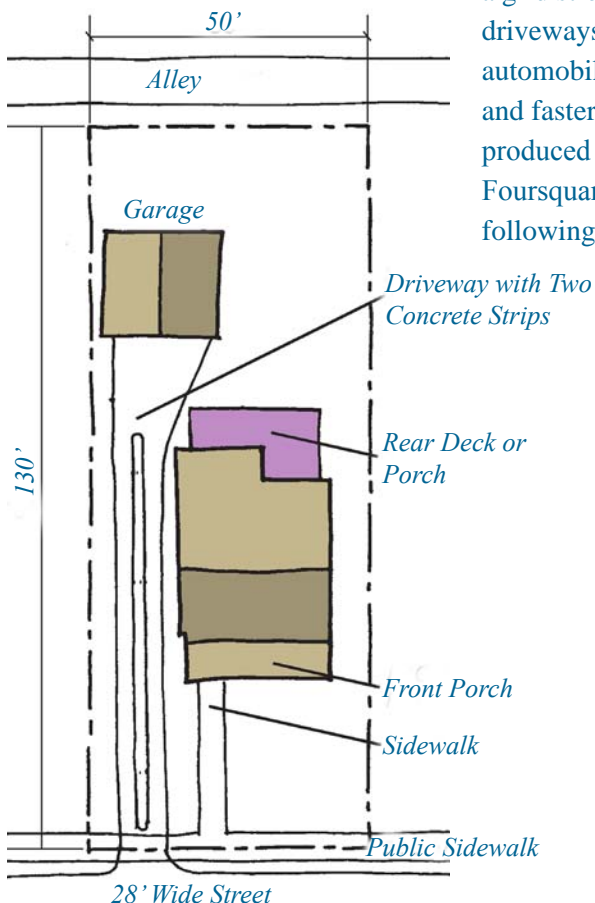
Photographs Courtesy of the Virginia Room

The next phase of development are classified as Traditional neighborhoods which were constructed between 1920 and 1940. The following neighborhoods, or portions of them, are classified as Traditional:

- Gilmer
- Grandin Court
- Greater Raleigh Court
- Harrison
- Kenwood
- Loudon-Melrose
- Melrose-Rugby
- Morningside
- Riverland
- Walnut Hill
- Roundhill
- South Roanoke
- Villa Heights
- Wasena
- Williamson Road

During this time period, more transportation options such as the street railway system and the automobile were introduced, opening previously inaccessible land to development. The Roanoke Railway & Electric Company (RR&E Co.) reached its peak in 1925, operating approximately 50 electric cars with more than 30 miles of track. The automobile, which revolutionized personal travel and ushered the decline of the streetcar, also became affordable and popular during this time period.

Like Downtown neighborhoods, Traditional neighborhoods still featured a grid street system with alleys, street trees, and sidewalks. However, driveways began to appear and streets became wider to accommodate the automobile. Milled lumber also became available, which promoted easier and faster residential construction. For the most part, Roanoke's builders produced a wide range of housing types and styles that included American Foursquares, Bungalows, Colonial Revival, and Tudor Revival. The following development patterns are indicative of a Traditional neighborhood:



### Streetscape Patterns

- Interconnected network of narrow, yield streets (28-40 feet) with parking on both sides.
- Concrete curbs, 3 to 8 inches in height.
- Deciduous trees located in 6 inch to 10 foot planting strips.
- Concrete sidewalks, 4 to 5 feet in width.

### Lot Patterns

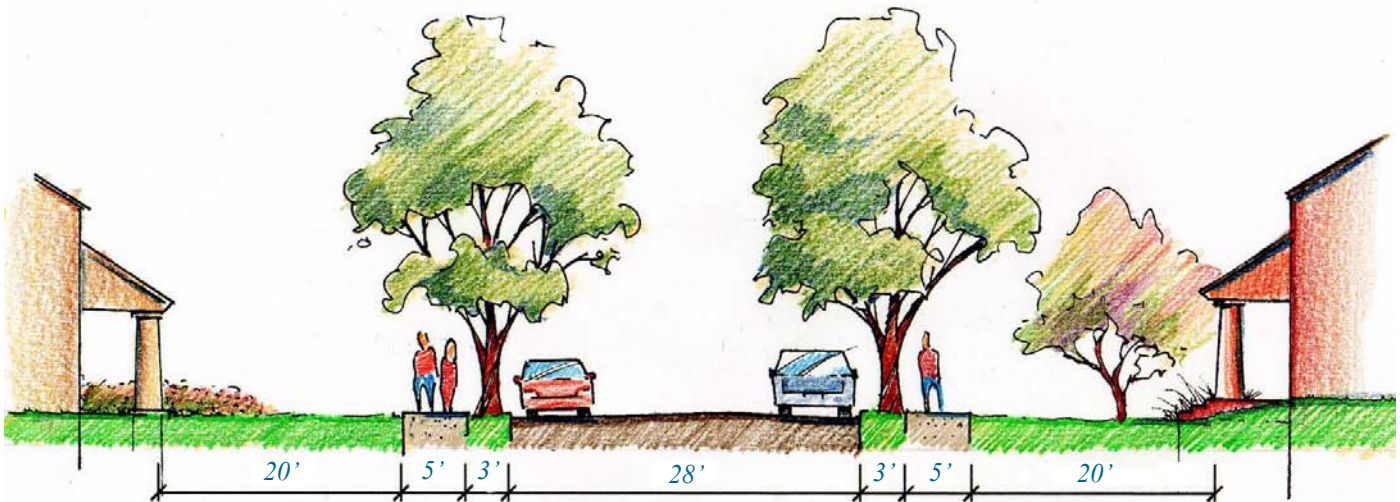
- Variety of lot sizes that range from 5,000 to 7,000 square feet.
- Shallow, consistent front and side yard setbacks.
- One and a half to two story homes. Porches depend more on style, not lifestyle.
- Garages located to the rear of the property, accessed by an alley or a concrete strip driveway from the public street.



**Figure 2: Street Railway System Network**



- Yards defined by hedge rows or decorative concrete retaining walls when necessitated by topography.
- Concrete walkways connecting the front entry to the public sidewalk.



*Typical Lot and Street Pattern in a Traditional Neighborhood*





*Homes in a Traditional Neighborhood*



*Traditional Streetscape*



*Typical Landscaping*

## Suburban Neighborhoods (1940s to Present)

The newest neighborhoods in Roanoke are classified as Suburban neighborhoods with construction spanning from mid-1940 to present day. The following neighborhoods, or portions of them, are classified as Suburban:

- Airport
- Cherry Hill
- Eastgate
- Edgewood-Summit Hills
- Fairland
- Franklin-Colonial
- Gainsboro
- Garden City
- Grandin Court
- Greater Deyerle
- Greater Raleigh Court
- Hollins
- Kenwood
- Mecca Gardens
- Melrose-Rugby
- Miller Court/Arrowood
- Monterey
- Norwood
- Peachtree
- Preston Park
- Ridgewood Park
- Riverdale
- Roundhill
- Shenandoah West
- South Roanoke
- South Washington Heights
- Southern Hills
- Villa Heights
- Wasena
- Washington Heights
- Washington Park
- Westview Terrace
- Wildwood
- Williamson Road
- Wilmont



*Glen Cove Subdivision in Roanoke Co.  
Photograph Courtesy of the Virginia Room*



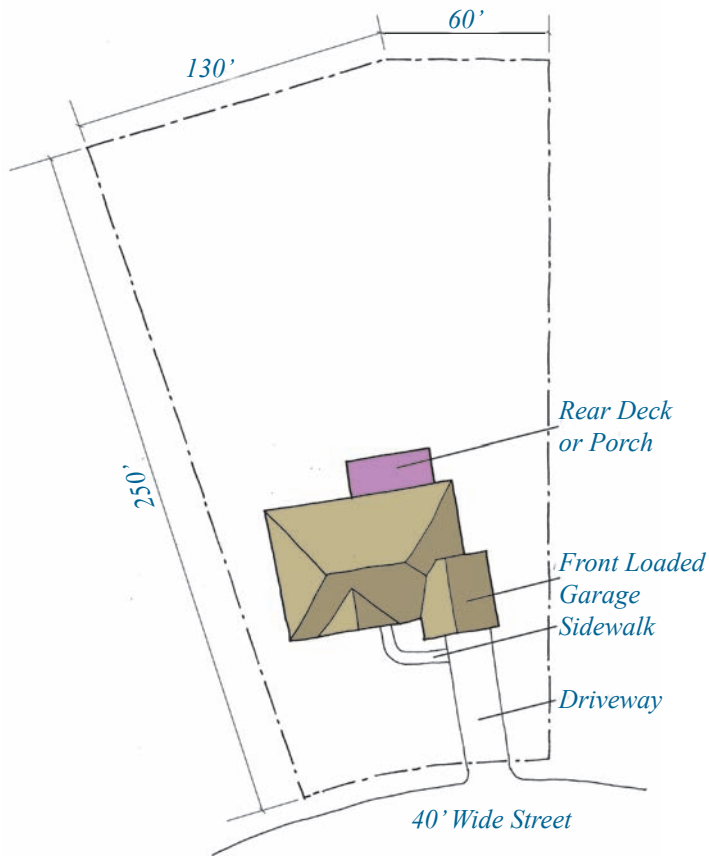
*Suburban Streetscape*



*Suburban Streetscape*

Following World War II, American cities adopted new settlement patterns that typify postwar residential growth across the United States: the suburbs. Whereas residences, commerce, and industry stood shoulder to shoulder in older areas, Suburban neighborhoods were built farther from places of employment and entertainment, as the automobile allowed people to travel greater distances in shorter periods of time. Streets tend to be curvilinear with few connections. Cul-de-sacs are nearly synonymous with suburban neighborhoods. They provide access to individual homes through local dead-end streets, while restricting heavy automobile traffic to main arteries on the



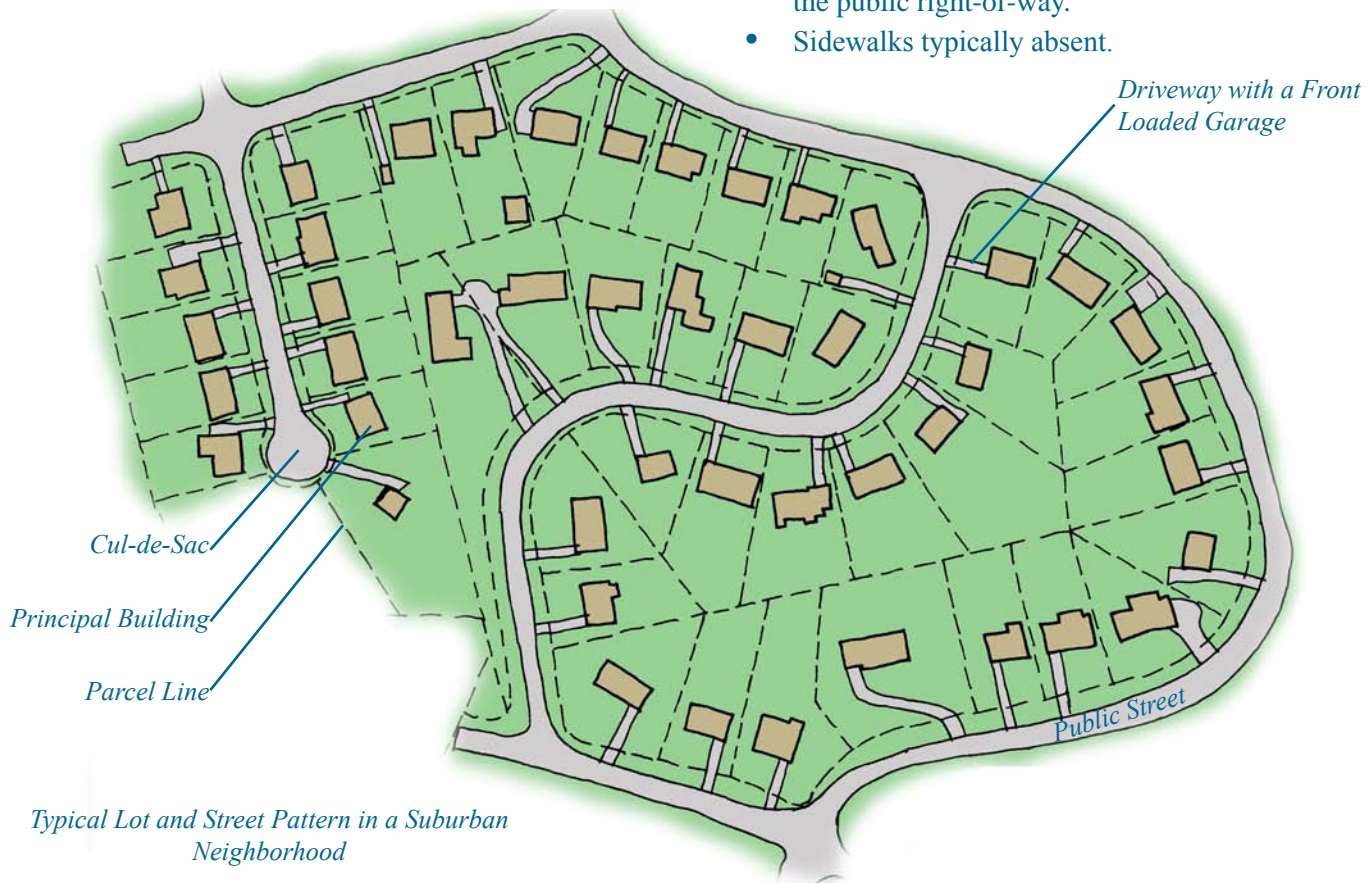


periphery of subdivisions. In many car-based suburbs, the ability to walk to and from shops or to neighboring houses diminished as dependence on the automobile increased. Eventually, sidewalks disappeared from most suburban developments.

The design of homes also changed with advances in technology. Front loaded garages and driveways became prevalent, while alleys disappeared. The prime social space moved from the front porch to the family room with the advent of television and air conditioning. Outdoor living area moved to the back yard and patios, decks, and privacy fences began to appear. The following development patterns are indicative of a Suburban neighborhood:

## Streetscape Patterns

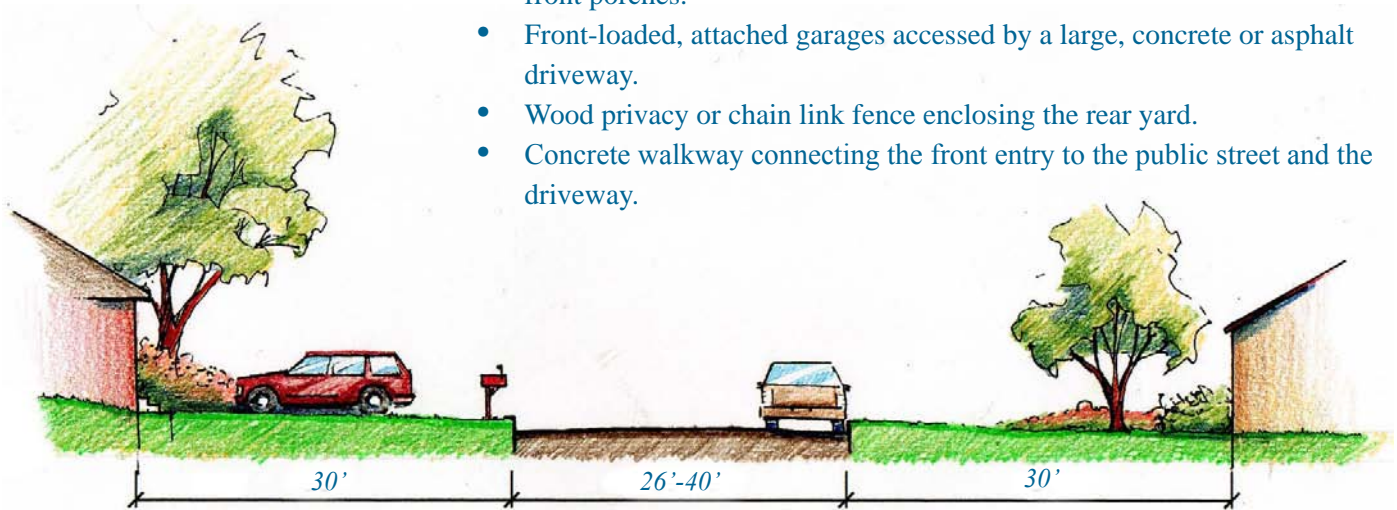
- Curved streets with limited connections and cul-de-sacs.
- Rolled or block edged concrete curbs, 7 inches in height, where present.
- Tree canopy provided in private yards, rarely in the public right-of-way.
- Sidewalks typically absent.



Typical Lot and Street Pattern in a Suburban Neighborhood

## Lot Patterns

- Large lots, 7,000 square feet or greater.
- Deep front and side yard setbacks.
- Sprawling homes often one-story or split level with small or non-existent front porches.
- Front-loaded, attached garages accessed by a large, concrete or asphalt driveway.
- Wood privacy or chain link fence enclosing the rear yard.
- Concrete walkway connecting the front entry to the public street and the driveway.



*Suburban Streetscape*



*Suburban Streetscape*



*Front Loaded Garage*



*Concrete Curb*



*Suburban Landscaping*



*Suburban Streetscape*

## Transitional Neighborhoods

Many neighborhoods transition from one classification to another for a variety of reasons. In some cases, these neighborhoods began as Downtown or Traditional neighborhoods, then experienced redevelopment or other disruptive changes. In other instances, lots were created during one era and then built on during another. This could result in a suburban style house on a narrow, tree lined street with sidewalks and an alley.



# Identify Your Neighborhood

The neighborhood map shown at the beginning of the Neighborhoods section is the first step to identifying your neighborhood type. This map is a general guide as development changes over time and there are no truly defined boundaries. The grid on the next page will help guide you in determining your neighborhood type. Follow the steps below to complete the grid and gain an understanding of your neighborhood.

## Exercise

Walk around and observe your immediate neighborhood - about two blocks in each direction. Take this book with you and complete the grid by filling in the check boxes that correspond to what you see.

Step 1: Locate your home on the Neighborhood Map.

Step 2: Get out and walk around your neighborhood.

Step 3: Identify street patterns.

Step 4: Determine street width.

Step 5: Identify sidewalks.

Step 6: Identify driveways.

Step 7: Identify garages.

Step 8: Identify lot sizes.

As you go through each of these steps, fill in the blank check box appropriately. For example, if you live in a neighborhood that has a grid or connected street pattern with alleys, then check the boxes next to these items. Checking these two boxes will indicate that these are typically found in either Downtown or Traditional neighborhoods. If your neighborhood has curvilinear streets or cul-de-sacs, this indicates that you most likely live in a Suburban neighborhood.

Fill in the check boxes to the best of your ability and review your results. Once you have completed this process you should be able to tell if the features that are present in your immediate neighborhood are typical of Downtown, Traditional or Suburban neighborhoods. Although there might be elements of all three neighborhoods in your neighborhood, by completing the entire grid you should be able to determine which characteristics are prevalent in your immediate area.

*Hint:*

As you walk around your neighborhood, one important piece of information that will help you complete this matrix is to know the length of your pace or stride. Knowing this will help you to judge distances such as street width and lot width conveniently without having to use a measuring tape. Typically, your full stride is equal to half your height. So a 6 foot tall person typically has a 3 foot stride. Measure the length of your standard pace prior to your neighborhood tour and this will assist you tremendously with this exercise.

<b>Neighborhood Characteristics</b>				
<b>Street Patterns</b>	<b>Check Box</b>	<b>Downtown</b>	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Suburban</b>
Grid/ Connected Streets				
Alleys Present				
Curvilinear Streets				
Cul de Sac				
<b>Street Pavement Width (Curb to Curb)</b>	<b>Check Box</b>			
Narrow 20' to 30'				
Medium 28' to 40'				
Wide 26' to 50'				
<b>Sidewalks</b>	<b>Check Box</b>			
Brick Sidewalks				
Concrete Sidewalks				
No Sidewalk				
<b>Driveways</b>	<b>Check Box</b>			
No Driveway Present				
Un-Paved Driveway				
Concrete Strip Driveway				
Paved Driveway				
<b>Garages</b>	<b>Check Box</b>			
No Garage Present				
Detached				
Attached				
<b>Lot Sizes</b>	<b>Check Box</b>			
5,000 Square Feet (s.f.)				
5,000 - 7,000 s.f.				
Greater than 7,000 s.f.				